DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 055 CG 022 550

AUTHOR White, Jacquelyn W.; Humphrey, John A.
TITLE A Theoretical Model of Sexual Assault: An Empirical Test.
PUB DATE 7 Apr 90
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (36th, Atlanta, GA, April 4-7, 1990).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Aggression; College Students; *Family History; Higher Education; Males; Models; *Predictor Variables; *Sexual Abuse; *Sexuality

ABSTRACT

Koss and Dinero's (1987) comprehensive developmental model of sexual aggression asserts that sexual assault is in part a result of early sexual experiences and family violence; that sexually aggressive behaviors may be predicted by such "releaser" variables as current sexual behavior, alcohol use, and peer group support; and that use of aggression in heterosexual conflict predicts sexually assaultive behavior. The model was elaborated to include measures of religious participation and several aspects of self-concept, including self-derogation. This elaborated model of sexual assault was tested through administration of a survey to 229 male college students. The hypothesized model, consisting of four categories of variables, was tested using a hierarchical blockwise discriminant function analysis. The results revealed that 83.8% of the cases were successfully classified: 91.4% of the nonaggressive men and 72.0% of the aggressive men were correctly classified. The results partially confirm the model. Early sexual experience, personality characteristics, peer group influence, alcohol and drug use, recent sexual experiences, and style of conflict management were all significant predictors. Neither family violence nor the measure of sex role attitude was predictive. The findings support the viability of a multidimensional model of sexual aggression and provide a profile of the sexually aggressive male. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED320055

A Theoretical Model of Sexual Assault: An Empirical Test

Jacquelyn W. White
Department of Psychology

John A. Humphrey
Department of Sociology

University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Symposium on Sexual Assault:
Research, Treatment, and Education
Southeastern Psychological Association
April 7, 1990

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jacquelyn W. White
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Recent research has identified several predictors of sexually assaultive behaviors in college men. Koss and Dinero (1987) provide the most comprehensive developmental model of sexual aggression to date. They argued that sexual assault was in part a result of early sexual experiences and family violence. In addition to various attitudinal and personality variables they suggested that sexually aggressive behaviors may also be predicted by variables known as releasers, which included current sexual behavior, alcohol use, and peer group support. They also found that use of aggression in heterosexual conflict predicted sexually assaultive behavior.

Related research on deviant and aggressive behavior has provided strong evidence that religiousity and self-derogation are also predictive of interpersonal violence. Kaplan's (1980) theory of self attitude has argued that deviant behaviors reflect

CG022550

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

attempts to restore one's sense of self-worth. The Koss and Dinero model was, therefore, elaborated to include measures of religious participation and self-derogation. Since self-derogation is just one aspect of one's self-concept, a multidimensional measure of self-concept was also included.

To test the elaborated model of sexual assault, an anonymous survey was administered to 229 men enrolled in introductory sociology classes. These students were primarily freshmen (58.3%) and sophomores (25.1%), white (87.2%), single (94.9%), living in a dormitory (54.3%), at home (21.9%), or in an apartment (17.8%).

Sexual aggression was assessed using the Koss and Oros (1982) Sexual Experiences Survey. This survey permitted the categorization of men into one of seven mutually exclusive categories based on the types of sexually assaultive behaviors reportedly committed. Table 1 describes the distribution of men into the various categories and shows how categories were collapsed for the purpose of data analysis. As can be seen, 62.9% of the sample reported no sexually assaultive experiences. Of the remaining sample, 37.2% admitted to engaging in some form of sexual behavior against the woman's will. It was the two categories, sexually nonaggressive and sexually aggressive, that the model attempted to predict.

The hypothesized model, consisting of four categories of variables, was tested using a hierarchical blockwise discriminant function analysis. Figure 1 describes the model. The first

category of variables was labeled Early Experiences. This included measures of family violence and sexual experiences before the age of 14. Family violence included measures of the frequency with which the child received physical blows and the frequency with which one witnessed parents hitting each other. Sexual experiences were assessed by determining whether or not a range of activities from the showing of genitals to sexual intercourse had ever occurred.

The second category consisted of attitudinal and personality measures previously implicated in sexually assaultive or deviant behaviors. The six subscales of the Spence, Helmreich, and Holahan (1979) Extended Personal Attributes Questionnaire was used to measure positive and negative self-descriptions of one's expressiveness and instrumentality. Five dimensions of self-concept were assessed using Stake's (1987) multidimensional self-concept scale; Kaplan's (1980) measure of self-derogation was also included. Religiousity was based on a composite measure of frequency of religious participation and rating of importance of religion in one's life. Finally, attitudes were assessed via a subscale of Ashmore and DelBoca's (1987) multiple components measure of gender-related attitudes and responses to a question asking about conditions under which one approves of sexual intercourse.

The third cluster of variables consisted of Current Influences. This included frequency and amount of alcohol consumption, and use of marijuana and other drugs. Importance of

peer approval and peer sex talk were also assessed. Finally, level of sexual activity was included in this cluster via measures of the individuals number of relationships and the number of different sex partners.

The fourth cluster consisted of five measures of strategies of responses to heterosexual conflict. These were based on a factor analysis of an extended version of the Straus Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS) (1979). The five strategies were rational, ignore, verbal aggression, physical aggression, and severe aggression.

A hierarchical blockwise discriminant function analysis, which entered blocks of variables in the order just described, indicated that 83.8% of the cases were successfully classified. Table 2 summarizes these results. Whereas 91.4% of the nonaggressive men were accurately classified, for a gain of 28.1%, 72.0% of the aggressive men were correctly identified, for a gain of 34.4%. Fifteen of the 36 variables significantly discriminated between the two groups. Table 3 listed these variables in order of magnitude of the standardized discriminant function coefficients. The means for each variable are also given.

The results only partially confirmed Koss and Dinero's (1987) model, in that early sexual experiences, but not family violence, were significant in the present analyses. Additionally, our measure of sex role attitudes was not predictive. However, other aspects of their model were

confirmed. In addition to early sexual experiences, personality characteristics, peer group influences, alcohol and drug use, recent sexual experiences, and style of conflict management were all significant predictors. The present results also indicate the importance of assessing religiousity, self-concept and self-derogation.

The findings support the viability of a multidimensional model of sexual aggression. There is evidence that sexually assaultive behavior is influenced by 1) intrapersonal, 2) interpersonal, and 3) sociocultural factors.

A profile of the sexually aggressive male emerges from the data. Compared to their nonviolent peers, these men 1) have had an higher than average number of childhood and recent sexual experiences; 2) tend to describe themselves in more traditional masculine terms; 3) have a lower sense of self-worth; 4) are lower in religiousity; 5) are more frequently involved in derogatory sex talk with peers; 6) use alcohol and other drugs more often; and 7) are more likely to use aggressive or ignoring tactics to express anger in romantic relationships.

Taken together, these findings suggest that at the social psychological level these traditionally masculine, but insecure, men use aggression as a way of dealing with their romantic partners in both sexual and non-sexual ways. Their aggression may, in part, provide an increased sense of control and as a consequence heighten their self-esteem.

At the subcultural level, the findings indicate that these men are more involved in explicit sex talk with their peers, are more highly sexually active, and use alcohol and other drugs more than their nonaggressive counterparts. These behaviors provide the impetus and opportunity for the expression of sexual aggression. Further, the absence of religious values undermines the influence of conventional social controls for violent behavior.

References

Ashmore, R. & DelBoca, F. (1987). The development and validation of a structured inventory to assess multiple components of gender-related verbal attitudes. Paper presented at the Nags Head Interdisciplinary Conference on Sex and Gender, Nags Head, N. C.

Kaplan, H. B. (1980). Deviant Behavior in Defense of Self. New York: Academic Press.

Koss, M. P. & Oros, C. (1982). Sexual Experiences Survey: A research instrument investigating sexual aggression and victimization. Journal of Clinical and Consulting Psychology, 50, 455-457.

Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R. L., & Holahan, C. K. (1979). Negative and positive components of psychological masculinity and femininity and their relationship to self-reports of neurotic and acting out behaviors. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37, 1673-1682.

Stake, J. (1987). A multidimensional measure of self-concept. Paper presented at the Nags Head Interdisciplinary Conference on Sex and Gender, Nags Head, N. C.

Table 1

Distribution of Sample into Categories of Sexual Experiences

CATEGORY	N	%
NONAGGRESSIVE	137	62.9
No sexual experiences	9	4.0
Consensual sexual contact	37	17.8
Consensual sexual intercourse	91	41.1
AGGRESSIVE	84	37.1
Forced sexual contact	2	1.0
Verbal coercion	66	29.7
Attempted forced intercourse	3	1.5
Forced intercourse	16	5.0

Figure 1

Hypothesized Model of Sexually Aggressive Behavior

EARLY EXPERIENCES

- Family Violence: Experiences parental aggression
  Witnessed parental aggression
- Early Sexual Experiences: Show organs
  Fondling
  Attempted intercourse
  Intercourse

PERSONALITY/ATTITUDES

- Masculinity/Femininity: Positive masculinity
  Negative masculinity
  Bipolar masculinity-femininity
  Positive femininity
  Verbal Aggression
  Communal dependency
- Self-concept: Likeable
  Vulnerable
  Powerful
  Gifted
  Moral
- Self-derogation
- Sex Role Attitudes
- Religiousity

CURRENT INFLUENCES

- Alcohol use
- Marijuana use
- Other drug use
- Importance of peer approval
- Peer sex talk
- Number of relationships
- Number of sex partners

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TACTICS

- Rational
- Ignoring
- Verbal aggression
- Physical aggression
- Severe aggression

Table 2

Classification Results

GROUP	ACTUAL N	ACTUAL %	PREDICTED GROUP MEMBERSHIP (1) Nonagg	(2) Agg	% GAIN
(1) Nonaggressive	128	62.3	117/91.4%	11/8.6%	28.1
(2) Aggressive	82	37.6	23/28.0%	59/72.0%	34.4
(3) Ungrouped	19		17/89.5%	2/10.5%	

Table 3

Variables Contributing Significantly to the Discriminant Function Analysis

VARIABLE*	MEANS Nonaggressive	Aggressive
No. sex partners	2.40	3.83
SC: gifted**	4.79	4.43
CTS: ignore***	-.11	.35
Self-derogation****	3.31	3.12
CTS: physical aggression	-.20	.08
Early sex: show genitals	1.68	2.47
Peer sex talk	3.32	4.02
Other drug use	1.14	1.59
Early sex: fondling	1.58	1.93
EPAQ: bipolar masc-femin	3.37	3.46
EPAQ: communal dependency	1.88	1.79
SC: vulnerable	3.43	3.36
Alcohol use	2.76	3.55
CTS: rational	.12	-.26
Religiousity	2.08	1.83

*listed according to magnitude of standardized discriminant function coefficients
**SC=self-concept
***CTS=Conflict Tactics Scale factor scores
****higher scores, less self-derogation